

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
ORISSA REGIONAL BRANCH

RANDOM REFLECTIONS ON ADMINISTRATION

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Random Reflections on Administration

I must at the outset thank my esteemed friend, Shri Sukthankar, Governor of Orissa, for the signal honour he has done me by asking me to address you to-day. While I am myself a Governor of another State, I must frankly admit before Shri Sukthankar, I am only a subject claiming as I do the honour of being one of the soil-born and brought up at Peshampur, where my ~~in~~ and parents and father lived and contributed to the State along with many other citizens. I am a product of the Peshampur College that I obtained my early training, both in studies and politics, at the feet of great teachers who were imbued with the spirit of patriotism, integrity and character. And it is their teachings that have helped me during my life to occupy many positions either as an agitator, administrator, Minister, Ambassador or now as a Governor.

While it is the normal practice of your Institute to have the Head of the State as your President, you are indeed fortunate in having such an able administrator as Shri Sukthankar to guide the affairs of your organisation. As an able and tested administrator, he has held important positions, all of which he shouldered with great imagination and drive. I am afraid, under such circumstances, my address will be superfluous. My only justification, however, is that I cannot turn down the affectionate commands of my Governor.

Though an infant State compared to some others, I am glad to note that Orissa, under the leadership of my esteemed friend, Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab, and his colleagues, is

making a rapid headway. The efforts made by them and their predecessors are indeed appreciable. The construction of a Steel Plant and many multi-purpose river-valley projects signify to their earnest and concerted action to improve the economic and social life of the people.

With regard to the subject of my address, I would like to make a qualification and that is, I am not going to talk about any specific problems ~~admini~~ it will be something in the nature of random reflections on ~~administration~~.

We had the rare fortune ~~that~~ our Nation was led by a saint, statesman and practical idealist like Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. He secured for us political independence within a quarter of a century through the novel weapons of Non-violence and Truth, with no parallel in the history of any country. He succeeded in convincing the Britishers that they had no other alternative but to leave us and concede political independence. His achievement was entirely due to the fact that he never divorced practice from precept.

It must, however, be remembered that Mahatmaji, on the eve of the declaration of our Independence in 1947, emphasised that he would not ~~merely~~ contend merely with securing political *Swaraj*, and the foremost responsibility is that the Nation should secure economic independence, assuring every individual his fundamental rights adumbrated in our Constitution, specially 'the right to work' and the 'right to live' and all other amenities which would guarantee reasonable comforts to every individual from the womb to the

grave. In effect, it meant that every family should have a small house to live in, enough clothes to wear and three square meals a day.

If only we followed his directions in thought, word and deed after attaining independence, we would have secured the above objective. It must, however, be admitted that we had to face many problems after the partition of our country into Pakistan and India. The influx of a large number of refugees from West Pakistan and East Bengal—a problem of gigantic nature—coupled with many natural calamities, such as floods and famine, have adversely affected our development.

With the realization of independence, many changes have occurred and some other contemplated in the political, social and economic spheres. This changed political set-up, from a police into a welfare State, has brought many problems to the fore and one of the important ones is the systematic reorganisation of the administrative machinery to suit the country's present-day needs. Of late, the role of public servants in a welfare state has been discussed *ad nauseam*. Only last month, on December 4th, a Congress Member of Parliament moved a resolution in the Lok Sabha (though it was lost) to appoint a high-powered commission to suggest a ~~reorganisation~~ ^{reorganisation} of the country's administrative apparatus.

Bureaucratic administration has been the butt-end of many criticisms and jokes. This is not a peculiar situation in India. For example, the Report of Crichton Down Case in England, which forced a Minister to resign on account of the actions of his subordinates within the department, made a

strong attack on the Civil Service. 'The Report', to use the words of a British M.P., 'has done a great damage, because of the sustained onslaught which has been released upon the public service, whose servants have been castigated in all the journals of the middle-class and upper-class opinion as incomparable tyrants, secretive conspirators and discourteous non-entities, contemptuous alike of the individuals and of the real public interest.'

People in our country may not harbour such strong feelings as that, but nevertheless, the Civil Service in India has not been considered as above reproach, and this may be possibly because they are in power. Partly this might be due to our legacy of the Civil Service from the bygone days. As one senior civilian observed, this is due to a 'subdued psychological antipathy', because these officers had a good time under the British, and had put down the nationalist aspirations and now when India has attained Independence, they enjoy the same position and power. Such feelings, if they exist, are indeed unfortunate and have arisen because of a lack of appreciation of the role of civil service.

It may be pertinent to refer to what some of the 'old guards' of the Civil Service themselves have to say: "Failures in administration, such as corruption, delays in correspondence and publication of reports, with-holding important information from the public, lack of interest and action in matters of basic administration etc., have been the subject of frequent comments in public and the press. Yet they continue without abatement. The public suffers, no doubt, but it lacks maturity and needs guidance. It seems

therefore that the concentration of efforts should be on the adjustment of the machinery of administration with a view to creating a better understanding between the Civil Servant, the Minister and the people. This tripartite co-operation is, in my view, of basic importance. Without it no substantial improvement can be expected. In achieving the desired result, the civil servant, collectively but not individually, can play a highly important part. Such collective action to maintain administrative standards is being taken by the civil services of some progressive countries and by the international civil service. In India it is most needed because the falling off is so marked. If the civil service in India fails to make this collective effort, the civil servant must share the blame with the Minister for the deterioration in administration. Because of his number, experience, training and security of tenure, his failure will be less excusable and he will have himself to thank if the public is more critical of him than of the Minister." This has been the view of Mr. S. Lall, who rose to the eminence of Secretary of Labour, Government of India and later did considerable work in the U. N. Secretariat as Assistant Secretary-General.

Delivering the Convocation Address at the Travancore University last year, Shri N. R. Pillai, whose contribution to internal and external affairs is significant, clearly stated what is expected of a civil servant in the new society:

"The New Civil servant should possess all the traditional virtues, namely, efficiency, integrity and loyalty. The public servant of to-day should be one richly endowed with human sympathy and a widely awakened social conscience. He

should not merely be a yes-man nor should he be a no-man. The yes-man tries to please others while the no-man pleases himself. The yes-man does not reveal his mind while the no-man has no mind to reveal. Both species are a danger to any organisation."

Though the civilian plays a junior role to the Minister, he should remember that he is the pivot round which the entire ministry revolves. He is the repository of experience, without which skilled democracy cannot function efficiently.

Our success and the future reconstruction of the country depends upon scientific organization and the discipline that we could inculcate in all sections of society—the citizens, the students, the teachers and the officers of Government. The responsibilities of efficient and clean administration are all the more now. For if the social and economic plans launched by the Government are to succeed, we will have to put all these policies into execution and production will have to be organised and geared up to this end. And this calls for a sound and efficient administrative machinery.

It would be useful to give some thoughts on the role of the Chief Minister and the Cabinet and their relationship with the permanent Service as they are all responsible for the governance of the country. In the successful Government of any State, the Chief Minister plays a very large part and he must be one who is intelligent and tactful and his attitude must be tempered with justice in the interests of the people generally. He must regard his colleagues as his equals and he must always be amenable to consider their points of view on every issue that comes before the Cabinet. His colleagues

must be made to feel that, while the Chief Minister is responsible for appointing and dismissing his Ministers, he is in other respects equal to his colleagues. The Ministers, while they should feel that they are entirely responsible for their subjects, should follow issues regarding other Ministries that come up before the Cabinet, so that the joint responsibility of the Cabinet in a democratic State should be real and effective and not merely formal and superficial.

The Ministers should be in touch with the general trends in the State and with the people. It is fruitful and advantageous if they could set apart every day when they are in the headquarters or on tour an hour or two for meeting people and giving interviews to them, and any representations made to them should be attended to and answered by them. The people must be made to feel that the Ministers are responsive and punctual in replying to the complaints or suggestions made by the general public.

The complaint in India is that red-tapism plays a large part in delaying decisions and putting them into effect, thus making Governments unpopular. The situation could be improved if all communications to Ministers are answered without any avoidable delay and files as they come up, should, in my view, be treated as creditors and disposed of immediately. In all big issues which come up for decision before Ministers requiring their closest scrutiny and study, they should first be ready with their tentative views and at the earliest opportunity must call for a conference of those interested in the issue and then finally come to a decision without any loss of time.

I had the privilege of holding many portfolios during the time I was a Provincial Minister in the integrated State of Madras, the subjects being Industry, Commerce, Labour, Co-operation, Electricity, Harijan Uplift, Forests and Planning, and so I claim from my own experience of quick disposal of many big issues. I may illustrate as to the method of working by an example.

Supposing it is a matter which relates to Cooperation and the Minister in charge is eager to arrive at an early decision on important matters; he may usefully call the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, the Development Secretary, the Finance Secretary, Members of the Legislative Assembly interested in Cooperation, the President and Secretary of Provincial Cooperative Bodies, and have an exhaustive discussion at this meeting and then it will be possible for him to dispose of the file without much delay and without its going through various stages of the Secretariat and calling separate meetings of people interested in the subject. In our country, delay in the disposal of matters has resulted in loss of efficiency and effectiveness of the administration.

The Minister in charge of a particular portfolio must consider his officers in the Secretariat as his junior comrades and they must be made to feel that on any subject coming before the Minister they could, without any fear of consequences to themselves, state their views clearly, and the Minister must appreciate a point of view even if it comes into conflict with his own. If this attitude is understood by the Secretariat, the officers will be able to state their views

in an impartial manner. Otherwise, there will be a tendency on the part of the Secretaries to try and know the Minister's mind in advance and prepare the background as it would suit him and sometimes this may not be really beneficial to the State. The Minister should not only appreciate the opposite point of view, but encourage the Secretaries to give their own views. There will be comraderie if this course is adopted and administration will run smoothly and no question should arise later as it did a year or two ago as to who was responsible for a certain decision—the Secretary or the Minister.

Once an order is passed by a Minister, after taking into consideration fully all aspects of the matter, the Secretary who may have differed with the Minister during discussion stage, must take it as his sole responsibility to consider that the final order of the Minister was one which should be executed without question, as if the order was his own.

No Government can administer successfully unless the Minister in charge of the particular portfolio takes the entire responsibility for the acts of commission and omission of his Ministry. That should be clearly understood in a Parliamentary democracy and that alone will ensure its efficiency and above all, the loyalty of the Secretariat to the Minister concerned.

So far as the rank and file working under the officers are concerned, they must feel a sense of loyalty and patriotism towards their country and they should also consider that they are entrusted with the task of running

the administration, not merely as wage-earners, but as responsible citizens rendering service to the community.

Ministers must be selected on the basis of not only patriotism and sacrifices they have made in the interests of the country, but they must also combine wisdom, experience, intelligence and ability and industry. Then they could render a good account of themselves during the time they are Ministers.

The Members of the Legislature have also a large part to play in the administration of the State. Once they are elected, while they may belong to different parties, they must consider that they represent the united will of the people and try to secure for them the fundamental rights adumbrated in our Constitution. On all matters for the effective good of the people, they must not oppose for opposition's sake, but must unite and produce the best results possible. No democracy can succeed without an effective opposition and it should be welcomed and respected by the party in power. Constant meetings on big issues between the party in power and the opposition may lead to the smooth working of the administrative machinery. The ideal practice of the Parliamentary methods followed in the British Cabinet and Parliament can be emulated with advantage by democracies elsewhere.

Discipline, organization, a spirit of patriotism and integrity are the basis on which the future foundations of any State should be laid. It must be understood that everyone living in a State should eschew parochialism, casteism,

communalism and sectionalism. Corruption of all kinds should be rooted out in every form. The minorities in every State should be assured that their due interests in the State are not jeopardised in any manner and that it made no difference to their interests by their being thrown into another State. The majority community in a State must feel that they are the guardians and trustees of the minorities while assuring equal rights and privileges. Otherwise, States formed on linguistic division will be a failure, resulting in discontent, distrust and frustration. Speaking for myself, I was born in Berhampur. It has gone away to Orissa and yet I feel proud I am an Oriya. Now living in Madras for the last three decades and being an Andhra, we have finally ceded it to Tamilnad; and yet I feel proud that I am a Madrasi. I could live for Madras and die for Madras. My wife belongs to Bellary. We conceded it to Mysore and yet we feel we are good Mysoreans. Speaking as the Head of the State of Uttar Pradesh, I feel proud to be its first citizen in my thoughts and actions and I always identify myself with all its interests and activities. If we in India could all feel that we are Indians first, Indians last and Indians always before we belong to any region or community, it will be of immense benefit to the country.

While the regional languages must be emphasized and while that language might become the basis for running the administration, the mother-tongue of certain sections of the people may not be destroyed, and the minorities must be given the opportunity of being in touch with the culture based on their mother-tongue and there should be no hatred to-

wards that language. Otherwise, the States organized on the basis of language may not be as successful as they should be.

India is to-day determined to establish a socialist Pattern of Society. At the same time, the public and private sectors will exist for a long time before our industries are nationalised and socialised. The Governments of each State and the Centre itself must try to protect the legitimate interests of both the sectors and they must be placed on a position of equality. So long as the conditions prescribed by Governments are followed, they should have complete autonomy in both sectors to run their industries.

The interests of the industrial workers in both the sectors must be safeguarded and their fundamental rights secured. It must, however, be remembered that what applies to the private sector applies equally to the public sector. After all, it is the public sector that must set an example to the private sector in the management of industries.

Some attention has to be paid to the development of discipline amongst students in the universities. We had the fortune of having ancient universities like Nalanda and Taxila where the relations between the teachers and the taught were ideal. I wish the teachers and the taught in the universities of the present day keep up to those high traditions and conduct themselves in a way, which will produce the future citizens, leaders and statesmen who are going to reconstruct this great land of ours.

Some of these ideas are foremost in my mind in matters relating to Public Administration. I do not claim that my views are correct or even practical. But I must, in justice to myself, say I have followed what I have stated here and put it into practice during the time I held different responsible offices in this county, and I would like you to follow my views so long as you feel that they are not only relevant but useful in administering this great country of ours.
